Invasions from Mongolia and Sinkiang have been encouraged by the possibility of access to China proper from these regions. From the Mongolian plateau several passes lead down into the plains and valleys of China. Sinkiang is comparatively low, and is provided, in the Tarim basin and oases to the eastward and in the valleys to the north of the Tien Shan, with natural highways, relatively unimpeded by mountains, into the valley of the Yellow River. It has, accordingly, been both an avenue and a source of invasions.

Manchuria, too, has been a menace. While its valleys are fertile and its climate much, more favorable to civilization than that of Mongolia, it was much slower—possibly because of its rigorous winters and perhaps for other geographic reasons—to develop a civilization than was the Yellow River Valley. Its peoples, therefore, have been lured by the charm of the lands to the south, and the narrow route along the seashore has resounded again and again with, the tramp of marching armies—from early historic times down into the most recent years.

There have been times, moreover, although less frequently, when the Tibetans have invaded China. For centuries border struggles between Chinese and Tibetans have been a fairly constant feature of Chinese history.

The Chinese, therefore, have had almost constantly to be on their guard against their neighbors to the north and west. Until the nineteenth century the security of their northern frontiers loomed as their chief foreign problem. This problem they handled in a variety of ways—partly by attempting to play off one "barbarian" tribe against another (a policy which they later tried with Occidental peoples, and with some success), partly by garrisons

reenforced by extensive fortifications, often by treaties with potential invaders, and occasionally by carrying the war into the enemies' territories and holding them in subjection. This last policy was particularly effective under the Manchus.

Fortunately for the Chinese, the peoples to the north have not always been able to form effective coalitions. By their nomadic manner of life they are condemned to warring tribal divisions. Repeatedly, however, a line of rulers has welded into a fighting force a sufficient number of them to seize part or all of the coveted prize to the south. At varying intervals, therefore—